

## [W. H. Mullins]

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Range-lore

Mrs. Annie McAulay

Maverick, Texas

Editorial Copy

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### RANGE-LORE

W. H. (Uncle Billy) Mullins, was born in Fayette County, Texas, September 5, 1862. His parents moved to Bastrop County when he was only a few years of age. It was there that he lived his boyhood days. He moved to Colorado City, stayed only a short time, then moved back to Bastrop County. He moved to Runnels County in 1884 and settled at Walthall.

Mr. Mullins says: "When I first began riding, I had to be helped on my horse. I helped to work cattle in Bastrop County- began when quite young- but it was quite different from working on the open range in West Texas. There we had neighborhood pens for the herds, and some fences. Round-ups weren't so glamorous or hard there. And too, the herds weren't so large.

"My first experience on the range in the west was with the Cross Tie outfit at Colorado City. We had awfully good 2 luck the year I worked there; never had no serious stampedes

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or nothing of the kind. We sure did have a bunch of good cowhands to work with. We had to work pretty hard and in all kinds of weather, but that goes with a cowboys life. And seemed like it rained a terrible lot while I was there. We had to take it night or day if we was out. I've slept on the wet ground many nights with very little to cover with. But a feller got use to it. We learned to rough it, and liked it too.

"I helped to drive about one thousand or fifteen hundred head of cattle, from Bastrop to Coryell County in 1883. We went from there in a short time to Kimble County, and finally loaded with the herd in Runnels County in 1884. I was working for my uncle, Colonel D. W. Jones. He owned a lot of land in Runnels County, over west of Winters and also in Tom Green County, around what is known as Crows Nest. He told me I could take my choice- bring the herd to Runnels County and start a small ranch or take it to Tom Green County and start one. I chose Runnels. I settled on a ranch nine miles east of the present town of Winters, in the Moro Mountain section.

"In them days many of the smaller ranchmen would throw in with the larger outfits. In Bastrop County each fellow worked independently, carrying his grub and bedding on his saddle, although they did round-ups together, but here we'd 3 work with a big outfit and take orders from their foreman. They furnished the chuck wagon or wagons and all the little fellers would take what hands he had and all work together in the general round-ups or drives. If they came across an unbranded calf they'd brand it.

"I worked with the Parramore outfit, and Jim Johnson was my boss. The Parramore was one of the biggest in the county then. I respected their rights and wishes and they respected mine and we got along real well.

"I made three hundred mile trips or drives for cattle while on the More ranch. We drove fifty horses one time. It took about sixteen days, with good luck, to make the trip from Bastrop County to Runnels. Eighteen miles a day with a herd of dogies was considered pretty good time.

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"I remember we had one pretty serious stampede once when coming from Bastrop County with a herd. We never knew what disturbed them, perhaps the howling of a wolf pack, but they kept us up and at work all night. We were watching them pretty close and when they started running we did too, and we managed to keep them from scattering very much. But next morning we still had our herd if we were six miles from our camp place. Luck I guess was with us, as we could sort of keep them in between hills, it being a hilly country.

"I believe the best rider, bronc buster at least, was a negro boy that worked for Mr. Parramore. He brought him 4 from Arizona to Runnels just to break his horses. There was about fifty head of young stuff in the bunch when he first came and he rode every dad-blasted one of 'em. Sometimes when a feller would get on a horse and get throwed he'd say, "Let me ride him," and he'd ride him. He was sure some buster.

"I didn't happen to knot any women cooks, and women didn't work as cowhands much in the early days. They rode on side saddles and were very helpless. Later of course, after they had discarded the side saddle, more women rode and helped with the ranch work. My daughter was a pretty good rider herself.

"I don't know very much about the fence cutting trouble but Mr. Parramore and some others did get some fences cut. There were a few outfits that resented fences terribly, but ours didn't. There was same hard feelings for a time, but settlers were coming in so fast and fences being built and it was all soon forgotten.

"I can truthfully say that Runnels County ranchers and their hands were civilized and always tried to do the decent thing. We had less trash and rough stuff than some other counties at that time, and I believe that holds good to the present time. If the undesirables happened to drift in here, they soon found out they were with the wrong crowd and drifted on. Of course the boys played pranks, but never really did much harm."

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### BIBLIOGRAPHY

W. H. Mullins, Ballinger, Texas, interviewed February 24, 1938.